

REMARKS

There remains pending in this application claims 1-3 and 5-7, of which claim 1 is independent. No claims have been added or cancelled.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

The invention as now set forth in independent claim 1 is directed to an image heating apparatus which comprises a conveying roller for conveying the recording material, heat supply means which supplies heat to the conveying roller, the heat supply means being in contact with an external periphery of the conveying roller to form a heating nip portion, and backup means which forms a conveying nip portion in cooperation with the conveying roller for nipping and conveying the recording material. As amended, claim 1 now more clearly recites that an image on a recording material conveyed by the conveying nip portion contacts the conveying roller. The invention is further characterized in that, in a rotating direction of the conveying roller, the heating portion has a width larger than a width of a conveying nip portion, and a total pressure applied to the conveying nip portion is larger than a total pressure applied to the heating nip portion. In addition, the heat supply means includes a heat generating member, a holder for supporting the heat generating member, and a flexible rotary member nipped between the conveying roller and the heat generating member and rotating around the holder, and the heating nip portion includes a first heating nip portion which is formed by the heat generating member and the conveying roller through the flexible rotary member and a second heating nip portion which is formed by the holder and the conveying roller through the flexible rotary member, a position of the first heating nip portion and a position of the second heating nip portion being

different from each other in the rotating direction of the conveying roller.

Each of claims 1-3 and 5-7 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Izawa et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2003/0118363) in view of Yamamoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,051,784). In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

As noted above, the present invention as now more clearly defined is further characterized in that (1) an image on a recording material conveyed by the conveying nip portion contacts the conveying roller, (2) in the heating nip portion, a first heating nip portion is formed by the heat generating member and the conveying roller through the flexible rotary member, and (3) in the heating nip portion, a second heating nip portion is formed by the holder and the conveying roller through the flexible rotary member.

The applied art is not understood to teach or suggest the invention as now recited in each of the claims, whether taken individually or in combination.

Thus, in contrast to the presently-defined invention, Yamamoto et al. discloses an apparatus in which a conveying roller contacts a surface opposite to the surface which has an image. Thus, in Yamamoto et al. a conveying roller does not contact a surface which has an image, as called for in the present invention. Moreover, with regard to Figure 4 of Yamamoto et al., in an area in which n1 is excluded from n2 referred to in the outstanding Official Action, there is shown a gap between the roller 28 and heater holder 27. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that the area recognized as a nip portion by the Examiner does not in fact correspond to the second heating nip portion of the claimed invention.

Izawa et al. has been discussed in the prior Amendment (inadvertently spelled

with an “a”). However, as acknowledged in the outstanding Official Action, Izawa et al. does not teach that the heating nip portion includes a first heating nip portion which is formed between the heat generating member and the conveying roller and a second heating nip portion which is formed between the holder and the conveying roller, a position of the first heating nip portion and a position of the second heating nip portion being different from each other in a direction which the conveying roller moves. Thus, even in combination with Yamamoto et al., Izawa et al. is not understood to teach or suggest the invention as recited in independent claim 1.

The remaining claims in the above application depend from claim 1 and are therefore patentable over the art of record for reasons noted above with respect to claim 1. In addition, each recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding matters in the above application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the above application are respectfully sought.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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